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C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 002903

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, EUR/RPM  
NSC FOR WOOD  
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TAGS: MOPS PGOV PREL PTER AF

SUBJECT: GHAZNI GOVERNOR ON OCTOBER 25 KILLING OF CONTRACT SECURITY GUARDS IN QARABAGH DISTRICT

Classified By: DCM Christopher W. Dell for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Dr. Mohammad Usmani, the Governor of troubled Ghazni province, is struggling to manage fallout from an October 25 incident in Qarabagh district. Allegedly, U.S. forces accidentally killed 22 Afghans, at least nine of whom were private security employees on duty at two long-established checkpoint outposts. Governor Usmani partially blames poor coordination within the Provincial Coordination Cell, which misinformed the Polish Battle Group (PBG) that there were no &friendly& forces within the map grid where the incident took place, for its occurrence. He largely exculpates Coalition forces from blame for the incident, but he has received a rebuke from President Karzai and faces strong local reaction to the event, including pressure from within the Ghazni Provincial Council to mobilize large protests against PRT Ghazni. The Governor has launched an investigation commission comprised of provincial Afghan representatives (NDS, ANP, and ANA officials) and members of the Polish Battle Group. That commission began work October 28 on a report to the Governor to clarify what happened. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On October 27, Ghazni Provincial Governor Usmani, brought representatives of the ANA, ANP, NDS and MOI to PRT Ghazni. They met with the 1-506th Commander, the American PRT Commander, the Polish Battle Group Commander and PRT State Rep. Usmani stressed that the October 25 event provided a propaganda boost to the GIRoA's enemies and had already required his utmost efforts to forestall public backlash. He claimed that in the hours after he made a dangerous return by road to the province the night of October 25, he worked hard to prevent Ghazni's Provincial Council--"full of enemies"--from staging large protests against PRT Ghazni, including a general strike in the city bazaar. He said the enemy is already waging a successful propaganda campaign that centers on claims that Coalition forces are mistreating Afghan women and killing innocent people.

¶3. (C) The Governor said that the tragic incident appears to have been an accident, but a full investigation must be conducted and ways found to ensure that similar accidents never happen again. Preliminary inquiries, he said, suggest that the Provincial Coordination Cell (PCC, or OCC-P) bore some blame as it told the Polish Battle Group that there were no friendly forces in the map grid where the incident took place. (Note: Security guards working for a PRT contractor,

MACEC, have long been posted at the site of the incident to protect work on the Qarabagh D-Loop Road project. End Note.)

¶14. (C) Governor Usmani said that he does not blame Coalition Forces--including the unit that called in Close Air Support (CAS) on the contractors (who included some MACEC security guards))--for what happened. He said he wants Coalition Forces to continue operations against the enemy, but better coordination is needed &or the overall war will be lost due to such accidents, regardless of tactical victories.<sup>8</sup> He pointed out that the checkpoints destroyed at the incident site had been there for at least eight months.

¶15. (C) The Governor reported that he now has to repair his relations with President Karzai, to whom he initially reported that Coalition Forces had killed eight Arab fighters. "When I then had to tell President Karzai that 22 contractors were killed, he said, 'Shame on you, Usmani. Instead of Arabs, you killed your own security people.'<sup>8</sup>

¶16. (C) PRT Commander Burke expressed condolences on behalf of the Coalition for the incident and noted that all elements located at PRT Ghazni had informed their superiors of the incident, and were keeping them informed as information came in. Commander Burke said that PRT Ghazni will ensure that the dead workers' bodies are delivered to their families.

¶17. (C) Outgoing Polish Battle Group Commander LTCOL Szymanski agreed that better coordination needs to take place within the PCC. He noted that he had learned about the operation only two hours beforehand, and cautioned that sometimes the maneuver battalion only receives 30 minutes' notice and the

map grid for the location of the operation. Szymanski said he will investigate what happened at the PCC, and stressed the need to strengthen control of private security companies and ensure that the PCC knows where they are. Szymanski noted that he had passed all the information he had to date on the incident to Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) Command at Bagram Air Field and the ANP Zone Commander. He assured the Governor that nothing would be kept secret, and that the incident would be investigated thoroughly and honestly. He thanked the Governor for his help on this and other incidents.

¶18. (SBU) At the conclusion of the meeting, the participants agreed to form a commission to quickly but thoroughly investigate the incident. PBG Commander LTCOL Szymanski offered up two personnel and a Military Police representative from the incoming Polish Task Force, stressing that they will be impartial since they are new. The commission intends to interview personnel from the unit that carried out the operation. Governor Usmani nominated ANP Provincial Police Chief COL Zaman and an ANP attorney, ANA Kandak Commander COL Nasser, and a Mr. Hanjan from the NDS for the inquiry. The ANA will also send a military attorney. It was agreed that the commission's first meeting would take place on October 28, and that the final report would be submitted to the Governor for his review and recommendations as to distribution.

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